

[p. 70]

III

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(1) THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF *MANGALA*

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788 **E**VERY society has a body of ritual, and certain ritual acts forming part of the body of ritual repeat themselves constantly. Not only ritual acts, but also ritual complexes, which are wholes made up of several individual ritual acts, frequently repeat themselves. Several such ritual complexes and some individual ritual acts might be together knit into a still wider ritual whole which repeats itself occasionally.

576 Salutation is an individual ritual act. It might be of two kinds, either elaborate as that adopted by a young person towards an elder on a ritual occasion, or simple, like that prevailing between two equals. In the former case the younger person thrice touches the older man's feet with both hands, and after each touch he takes the hands to his forehead where he brings them together. In the simpler form of salutation which prevails between equals, each person folds the palms before his chest, and as he does this he moves his head slightly to indicate a bow. The folding of the palms and bowing of the head are the most important parts of the ritual act of salutation.

Salutation of the elaborate kind is only one of several ritual acts in the ritual complex of *mūrta* (*vide infra*), and *mūrta* is again part of *mangala*. Formerly there were several kinds of *mangalas* and the narrowing down of *mangala* to mean marriage exclusively is a fairly recent phenomenon.

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[304] Formerly *mangala* was performed to mark the attainment of social adulthood by a boy when his ears were ritually bored by the goldsmith. This *mangala*, the first to be performed for a boy, was called *hemmi kutti mangala*, or 'the *mangala* at which the ears are bored'. The wearing of ear-rings was symbolical of the attainment of social adulthood. One who was physiologically an adult, but who had not undergone the ear-boring *mangala*, did not count as an adult for ritual and social purposes.

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302 century. The exclusive shaving of the face as distinct from the
177 shaving of the face along with the head also came into vogue at the
same time, and moustaches, which were only removed at the death
of a very close relative, began to disappear entirely.

302 Marriage conferred on a man the right to have his head shaved
589 periodically, and a bachelor was not entitled to it unless he had
681 undergone the ear-boring *mangala*. The latter ritual conferred
social adulthood on a male: in the folksong about the hero Kaiyan-
dira Appayya it is seen that he successfully claims to be an adult on
the strength of the fact that his friends, all boys tending cattle,
performed this ritual for him in the jungle.

884 The ear-boring *mangala* has now entirely disappeared, and I
304 learn that even fifty years ago it was only performed very rarely,
and that, too, as a votive offering to a deity. But though the ritual
had disappeared the concepts associated with it continued to exist
• [301] for some time afterwards. It was considered improper for an adult
[764] to be without ear-rings, and such men were not admitted to the
temple of Iggutappa in Nālknād. If a Coorg died without his ears
being bored, the corpse's ears were pierced before burial.

[302] The ear-boring *mangala* was the first of several *mangalas* for a
male, and the head was shaved for the first time on this occasion.
The performance of this *mangala* conferred certain privileges
on the individual in question, one of which being that he could
have his face shaved periodically by a barber.

783 At the various *mangalas* shaving is a preparatory ritual act. On
302 these occasions it is followed by a bath and by the wearing of
ritually pure robes. These preliminary rites make the subject
pure, and while in this condition he performs certain rites, or others
perform certain rites towards him.

765 The form of shaving prevalent normally is different from that
302 prevalent at mourning. Normally the tuft at the crown and the
moustache have to be left untouched at shaving, while at mourning
it is obligatory, at any rate for the chief male mourners, to have their
heads and faces shaved entirely. Other close relatives who are
junior to the dead person are recommended to follow the example
of the chief mourners, but it does not seem to be obligatory for
them. The mourners get themselves shaved on the morning
following the disposal of the corpse; and this shave marks the
beginning of ritual mourning. The mourners may not have another
shave while ritual mourning lasts. In the case of the eldest son and

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coulu or salt-impregnated earth¹ has been dissolved. With the aid of a few mango leaves he sprinkles the solution all over the house and this act rids the house of its impurity and restores it to normal ritual status. Nowadays, however, Coorgs increasingly call on a Brahmin to purify the house on the twelfth day.

It is probable the washerman was employed as purifier because of his occupation. But such a duty is not consistent with the position he normally occupies in the caste hierarchy. For instance, he is prohibited from entering the more sacred parts of an ancestral house, like the kitchen and central hall, as he defiles them by his presence. If, however, he has to enter them in the exercise of his duties—at marriage he covers the ceiling of the central hall with clean white sheets—they are purified subsequently. But no such inconsistency exists in the case of the Brahmin, and the increasing tendency to employ him is part of the general process of Sanskritization of Coorg customs.

VIII

After having been given a bath by three married women, the groom is helped into his ritual robes and ornaments by the best man. He has to wear a white cotton gown for the *mūrta*, and this is worn in such a way that the right side comes over the left side. A red silk sash secures the gown at the waist. The ornamental Coorg knife, *piché katti*, is tucked into the sash in front, and the broad Coorg sword, *oḍi katti*, hangs from its clasp at the groom's back. The clasp is fixed to a chain which is tied round the groom's waist. The groom also wears a number of ornaments.

The groom wears the Coorg turban (*pāni mandé tuṇi*) which is flat at the top and also covers the back of the head. He may not wear any sandals, however, as leather defiles. He carries in his hand a staff (*gejjé tand*) with small bells tied to it near the top.

The bride wears a uniform of red silk: a red silk *sari*, a red silk full-sleeved Coorg blouse (*kaḷa kuppya*), and a red silk scarf which is tied round her head. She wears bangles, necklaces, ear-rings, and also ornaments on her ankles, feet, and toes.

The best man and matron of honour hold a white cloth umbrella over the groom and bride respectively.²

¹ The washerman uses *coulu* for washing clothes.

² Round about Mercara the bride and groom both wear a red silk veil during *mūrta*. In the southernmost part of Coorg, however, the veil is not worn by

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marriage. On the second day the groom's relatives performed *mūrta* to the bride, and the bride's relatives to the groom; and finally the groom performed *mūrta* to the bride. The groom and bride sat in different parts of the bride's house while *mūrta* was performed for each, and when this ended the groom walked over to the bride sitting in the kitchen. 593
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Nowadays, however, on the second day, the bride and groom are made to sit together in the central hall of the bride's house while *mūrta* is performed for each. Some Coorgs call this 'double *mūrta*'—the English word 'double' is used by them. I learn that this modification of the original Coorg custom was introduced over thirty years ago by a Coorg who occupied a high position in the government of a neighbouring province. This modification is clearly an attempt to Sanskritize a Coorg custom. [76]

A Coorg woman whose husband is alive enjoys a higher ritual and social status than a widow. This is so among high-caste Hindus all over India, and the Coorg phenomenon may be regarded as an attenuated instance of the Sanskritic phenomenon. A Coorg woman whose husband is alive wears a necklace of black glass beads and black glass bangles, and these ornaments have become the auspicious symbols of the married state for a woman. No widow may wear them. 589
[301]

There is need to distinguish between a woman whose first and only husband is alive and another who after being widowed has remarried. The latter's ritual status is inferior to the former's, but it is higher than that of a widow who has not remarried.

A widow who decides not to remarry wears a uniform of a white *sari*, a white blouse, and a white scarf. None of these garments may have a coloured border. [292]

In Sanskritic Hinduism a wife is expected to regard her husband as her deity. Widowhood is the result of evil actions performed in a previous incarnation. A widow is denied the ritual and social privileges of a married woman. She is not permitted to remarry. She is regarded as an inauspicious person. 593
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Sanskritic Hinduism emphasizes the affinal tie in a variety of ways, but chiefly ritual. Ritual ideas tend to be all-pervasive. The worship of symbols of the married state by women, the ritual and social inferiority of the widow to the *sumangali*, coupled with the ban on widow remarriage, and the linking of widowhood to the idea of *karma*, all contribute to the strengthening of the marital

776 are identified with Vishṇu. This is no doubt inconsistent, but
538 Sanskritization frequently produces inconsistencies.

177 Pannangālatammé is only one of several instances of deities
776 losing their caste. Kētrappa (m.) and Povvedi (f.) of Bēngūr lost
564 their caste too. The case of Povvedi of Bēngūr is interesting as her
namesake in Balmāvṭi, a village three miles away, retains her caste,
has a Brahmin priest, and accepts only offerings of fruit and flowers.
The ubiquity of the caste idiom deserves notice: the deities of the
lowest castes like Poleyas and Mēdas are not worshipped by the
higher castes, and these deities bear the same relation to the deities
of the higher castes which the lower castes themselves bear to the
higher. The habits of some deities are occasionally explained by
reference to the caste idiom. A deity who accepts animal-sacrifice
and liquor has lost his original high caste; and sometimes such an
explanation enables a Sanskritic deity to become the deity of castes
which consume meat and liquor.

III

581 Marriage is a preferred condition among Coorgs, and a married
789 man has a higher ritual and social status than a bachelor. A
bachelor's social personality is not regarded as fully developed.

In the case of women, however, the contrast is not so much
between spinsters and married women as between the latter and
[292] widows. A widow wears only white clothes, and these clothes may
not have a coloured border. The clothes and ornaments worn by a
● [301] married woman may not be worn by a widow. Certain ornaments
which are associated with a married woman, like black glass bangles,
necklace of black glass beads, and rolls of palm leaves worn as
ear-ornaments, have become symbols of the married state. As
such they receive ritual respect.

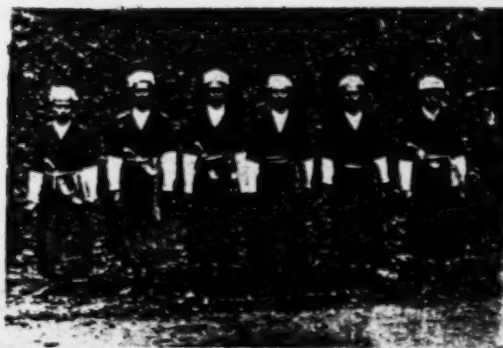
587 It is usual for young Coorg widows to remarry, and a remarried
widow has a higher social and ritual status than a widow who does
not remarry, though she does not have the same status as a woman
whose first and only husband is alive.

589 Coorgs do not differentiate between a married woman and widow
769 as thoroughly as, for instance, the Brahmins. Amongst the latter
marriage and patriliney are bound up with certain theological ideas:
a woman's husband is her god, and a son not only continues the
lineage but releases his ancestors from a particular kind of hell

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[515] wives, but not his brothers' wives, unless they are much older
[602] than himself,¹ must pour over him one pot of water each. After
this he is arrayed in full Coorg dress, including the turban, dagger,
and sword, and puts on heavy bangles and neck-chains. His
[515] long coat (kupia) should be white, as all such garments were
[602] anciently. The bride likewise is bathed by women and girls
[292] from among her relatives, no one being barred from this office
except widows. She is dressed in her best sari and headcloth and
[301] decorated with a great number of ornaments, toe and finger
rings, earrings, necklaces and chains, and hair-ornaments.
When the guests have all arrived in the early morning (all wearing
Coorg dress, though the men need not wear white coats), the
[292] bride and groom in their respective houses are brought forth
into the nellaki. Each is wearing in addition to their full dress
a cloth over the head, the bride's covering her face but left un-
fastened in front. Each, conducted by a near relative or friend
of the same sex (in the man's case frequently the husband of his
sister, in the woman's the wife of her brother), circles three times
in clockwise direction a stool between two standing lamps and
then is seated facing to the east on the stool, which has been
covered with a cloth. The nellaki was anciently the place for the
[342] ceremony; at present it often takes place in the yard of the house
[778] in a pandal built for the occasion and fitted with the stool and two
[178] standing lamps, but not with a hanging lamp. This shift of
[533] scene is due to the fact that the house is frequently too small to
accommodate all the guests. During the ceremony four Coorg
musicians beat on drums and sing the wedding song (this I hope
to present and discuss linguistically elsewhere).

[614] When the central figure of the ceremony is seated, his or
her mother, or if the mother is dead or a widow, the eldest
married woman in the sib who is not a widow, stands in front
of him or her. She takes from a large flat plate of rice a handful
[782] and throws some first to the hanging lamp, apparently as an
offering to the ancestors of the sib (if the ceremony is outside in
the pandal, this is omitted), then over her head towards the sun;

[607] ¹ Younger ones are said to be restrained by shyness, but the fact is
that they are women who are referred to as *macini* and are possible spouses
of the man, in case they should be widowed and he should become a widow-
er. Such relatives of a man, viz. all those whom he classifies as *macini*
and *mammā*, whether they are blood-relations (i.e. cross-cousins) or re-
lated merely by marriage, are the subjects of taboos with relation to
him. They begin to operate when both parties have attained puberty.
They may not touch one another, except in case of real necessity, nor
may they sit on the same bench. Other specific taboos operating between
[605] these cross-cousins seem to be lacking, since in general Coorg men and
[834] women observe about the same taboos in speech and action that are
observed in polite circles in western society. The specific taboos do not
operate between any other classes or relatives; it may be observed that
the taboo on touching is merely a very small extension of the usual reluc-
tance of a Coorg man to touch a woman.



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A Coorg Male Group



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A Coorg Married Couple

[facing p. 41]

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585 gossip, which is now and then broken by the noisy band of musicians.
 574 Meanwhile, the bride and bridegroom are bathed, he is dressed in his new
 292 kuppasam (coat) with a long red cotton or silk sash round his waist and
 • [301] his friends fasten into it the new pichathi, a present from his father,
 [405] together with a watch, and put jewelled gold rings on his fingers and a
 carefully tied turban in the approved Coorg fashion. A bright coloured
 handkerchief thrown over his shoulder completes his dress. The bride
 who is fully decked is left to the care of her friends.

585 In the bridegroom's house the wedding party proceed to the kaymada,
 [782] carrying a light which had been kindled at the sacred house lamp, and
 [354] ignite an earthen lamp there and invoke the blessings of the ancestors.
 On returning to the house the principal members of the family enter first
 into the inner hall, and the younger men follow and offer their customary
 salutations. At the auspicious hour, the bridegroom seeks the permission
 of the master of the house, and the elders to seat himself on the low three-
 legged stool kept in readiness and placed upon a carpet between two lighted
 lamps. These lamps trimmed with many wicks stand in metal dishes filled
 with rice by the side of which is a spouted brass vessel with milk. On the
 bridegroom being seated, the master of the house takes a handful of rice and
 585 strews it over his head and shoulders uttering the words, "Live well; and
 431 prosper well by God's favour", gives him a sip of milk, and drops a piece
 of money or other present in his lap, and passes on. Four men closely
 related to him do likewise. Then five of the nearest female relations
 [576] including the mistress of the house repeat the same formalities. Then the
 guests, male and female, do the same. Old people only touch the bride-
 groom's shoulder, those of equal age shake hands, while those below touch
 his feet as a mark of respect. As the presents accumulate, they are taken
 [589] care of by a friend who sits near him and watches what and by whom they
 [777] are given. Widowers and widows do not take part in the proceedings
 because they are unlucky.

585 The same ceremony is gone through in the bride's house at about the
 same time, but women have precedence over men. After this ceremony,
 the bridegroom rises and takes his meal with a group of twelve of the
 nearest relations (groomsmen) and the Arava. The guests who are
 [574] invited are sumptuously fed in the leafy shed put up for the occasion.
 [533] Various kinds of liquor are served. During and after feasting, the music
 makes a discordant and deafening noise.

After feasting, the bridegroom's party go to the bride's house,
 which is generally some miles away. On such occasions a Coorg
 bridegroom, mounted on a pony, dismounts at the gate of the
 bride's residence which he approaches barefooted. When he has advanced

COORG

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ful fashioned turban, rather flat and large at top and covering a portion of the back of the neck. They are found in all shades of complexion, and when dressed in a costume they look very grand. The officers and students have now taken to the European style of dress in preference to their own. 291
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The women are more conservative in their dress. It consists of a white or light blue cotton jacket with long sleeves fitting tight and close up to the neck. The skirt is white muslin or blue cotton stuff wrapped several times round and tied at the waist by a string. One end is brought over the bosom and knotted on the right shoulder. To give usefulness to the skirt, the other end is arranged into folds, which, contrary to the fashion of Hindu women, are gathered behind. The head is covered with a white muslin and coloured kerchief, one end of which encircles the forehead, and the four corners are joined together at the back, allowing the ends to fall over the shoulders.

Ornaments

The richness of the ornaments worn by a woman is the criterion to judge the status of a Coorg family. Glass, silver or gold bracelets are worn round their wrists. Their necks are adorned with chains of coral, pearls, or gold, from which are suspended old Portuguese coins. They have ornaments for the nose and the rims of the ears. They wear gold rings or rings set with precious stones, and silver ones are worn on the toes. These are similar to those of Hindu women. The bridal dress adds to all this finery a many-coloured shawl which covers the body, and in the absence of a kerchief, golden hair ornaments, *ch urigubbi* are worn. Coorg women are skilful in embroidery work, with which they adorn their white kerchief and the seams and corners of the men's white cotton dress. They use red marking cotton and their patterns are very complicated and elegant, and are equally visible on both sides of the dress. 301
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Martial Spirit

The Coorgs have earned a high reputation for their martial prowess. In the words of Lt. Conner, they may be said to be armed from their childhood and the martial spirit is inculcated from the beginning of a man's life. War and agriculture seem their twin natural pursuits, and no harm arises from this happy combination of soldier and husbandman. They show no trace of the savage disposition which often characterises the martial class. They resemble the Nayers in some respects. Both are devoted to arms. Both are characterised by a gallant spirit of generosity and delicate sentiments of honour. The feelings which attach the highlander to the mountains and that fondness for their country which distinguishes subjects of small States are observed among the Coorgs. 181

224 C. Cariappah, the Subadar of the taluq, having shot a tiger.
 554 Under a screen, on a wedding chair, his face towards the
 588 carcass sat the hero of the day, clothed in Coorg warrior
 costume and covered with flower wreaths and gold ornaments.
 Behind him stood his armour-bearers, in front the sacred house
 lamp on a heap of rice, poured into a brass dish. First each
 [431] member of his house, men, women and children, then all his
 [514] friends, one by one, stepped up to the bridegroom; strewed
 a handful of rice from the brass dish over his head, gave him
 from a brass vessel a sip of milk to drink and in making obeisance, dropped a silver coin into his lap. This money is given with a view to defray the impending expenditure on a sumptuous dinner, given to the whole company. A Coorg dance round the tiger concludes the tamash and the night wears away with singing and feasting.

* 136 Government has now fixed a reward of Rupees five for
 [654] the destruction of a tiger and Rupees three for that of a cheeta; but the unmutilated skin with the claws² has to be delivered to the Sirkar. The height of the tiger varies from 3 to 4 and his length from 6 to 7 feet to which 3 feet may be added for the length of the tail. His weight is from 250 to 400 lbs.

[301] Sometimes one sees children with the ornament of 2 tiger's
 [789] claws, joined together by silver or gold and suspended round
 [825] the neck. This charm is supposed to keep off the evil eye. The age of a tiger is said to be ascertained by the number of lobes of his liver, one lobe being added every year!

The cheeta (*Can. kiruba*) or panther is more common than the tiger. It is a very destructive beast to smaller domestic animals. In his depredations he is a coward, chiefly attacking his prey by night and fleeing man, if unmolested.

[554] Upon the destruction of a cheeta by a Coorg, the same festivities, as on the tiger hunt, take place, but there is less honour to the sportsman. The skin of the cheeta is spotted with

² [Errata: this should read "claws." See
 Corrigenda sheet, Cat. 116, P. 473--Analyst]

142 distinguished for bravery. Apparently anticipating the pre-
 302 sent military regulation, they shave their chin but sport
 554 mighty whiskers! The colour of the Coorgs is lighter than
 186 might be expected under this latitude. Their mode of life
 and pride of race impart to their whole bearing an air of
 manly independence and dignified self-assertion, well sustained
 by their peculiar and picturesque costume.

291 The principal Coorg dress is a long coat (kupasa) of white
 411 or blue cotton or dark coloured cloth and even velvet. It
 reaches below the knees, is open in front, has, if not white,
 short sleeves under which longer ones of a different colour
 extend to the waist, and is held together by a red or blue sash
 of cotton or silk which is several times wound round the waist
 and which holds the never failing Coorg knife, with ivory or
 silver handle and chains of the same metal. A red kerchief
 or the peculiarly fashioned turban, which is large and flat at
 the top and covers a portion of the back of the neck, forms
 the head-dress. The feet are bare or protected with light
 sandals. A necklace of the berry of Rudrākshi (Elaeocarpus
 ganitrus), silver or gold bracelets on the wrists, and silver
 and gold earrings with pearls or precious stones complete
 their festive costume. Those who are in possession of the
 Coorg-medal or the lunulate ornament called Kokalādi do not
 fail to suspend it round their neck, as may be seen on the
 front-illustration. Their every day dress is of course of a
 more simple nature. The Coorg warrior looks more imposing.

714 His dress is of the same cut, but of coarser material and
 411 shorter. In addition to his handy waist-knife (Picha-katti),
 he wears on his back in a strong clasp of brass the curved,
 broad-bladed Coorg knife (Odu-katti) which is seen in the
 147 hand of the figure in our illustration. In a hand-to-hand
 527 fight it was a most formidable weapon and since the young
 Coorgs have no longer Mussulman or Nair antagonists to
 decapitate, they display at their feasts the strength of their

* [Errata: This should read "wrist". See
 Corrigenda, Cat. 116; p. 473 -- Analyst]
 † [Errata: This should read "Kokalādi." -- Analyst]

292 the same time gives vent to their vexation at the intractability of these rude mountaineers.

301 [556] The head with its raven-hair is covered by a white muslin or coloured kerchief, one end of which encircles the forehead and the two corners are joined together at the back, allowing the rest of the cloth to fall gracefully over the shoulders. The wealth of a Coorg family is displayed by the richness of the ornaments of the women. Glass, silver or gold bracelets of a simple description span their wrists; their neck is decked with chains of coral, pearls or gold from which are suspended old Portuguese gold coins. Even the nose and the outer rein¹ of the ears are ornamented with pretty jewellery in gold, pearls and precious stones, and also silver rings are worn on the toes.

292 531 The white festive gowns of the men, as well as the kerchiefs of the women, are skilfully embroidered along the seams and in the corners with red marking cotton and the patterns of native design are often very elegant. The Coorg women esteem their own embroidery more than Berlin work, as the former unlike the latter shows the pattern equally well on both sides.

462 As for industry the Coorg women deserve high praise. They rise early and besides cooking and other domestic work, they bear a large share in the labours of the farm. The men plough the fields, transplant and reap the rice; the women carry manure, weed, fetch home and clean the paddy. The men do no menial work, they leave that to their women and to their servants, whilst they enjoy a dignified repose, discussing the affairs of the house and chewing betel, or stitching a piece of clothing in which art many are as expert as professional tailors, others, gun on shoulder, wander through the jungles in search of game, but the height of their ambition is to figure in the capacity of a Government Official in the administration of their country.

¹ [Errata: This should read "rim". See corrigenda, CAT. 116, p. 473--Analyst]



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COORGS

grandfather, father and grandsons.

Photogr. by the Rev. G. Richter.

Lith. by E. Kaufmann, Lehr.

[facing p. 128]

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*643 slaughter, game without distinction or number being killed on these occasions. He is a good marksman, uses his spear with dexterity, is an excellent mahout and skilful rider; it is difficult to say, whether he takes an active personal share in the administration of his affairs—I am led to think not—nor is it easy to state what are his usual occupations or the ordinary distribution of his time, when not exposed to public view; much of it, however, is devoted to frivolous and childish pursuits.

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[301] *Lingaraja is now in his forty-fourth year, about the middle size and actively formed, but in no way remarkable for any particular symmetry of features; he is rather dark complexioned and the general expression of his countenance is not disagreeable, though not indicating the habit of peremptory authority and acknowledged command; he is plain in his dress, being usually habited in a loose gown, reaching to his ankles; to this is added a black silk cape, and a cap of similar materials substitutes the place of a turban; on great occasions, however, this simplicity of dress gives way to the splendour of an English general's uniform; a string of pearls to which some jewels are affixed suspended round his neck forms the only ornament of his person, a Codagu sword is always placed on the table before him (it appears one of the ensigns of his authority) or carried with him, when he moves.

*The forms of his court exhibit but little pagentry, presenting nothing of that cumbrous and barbaric pomp in which Native Princes of whatsoever rank so much delight; indeed it is remarkable that he seems always surrounded by menials rather than men of rank. There is, however, an appearance of permanent regularity and economy, the reverse of that gorgeous improvidence for which they are remarkable. About 90 elephants and half as many horses together with some troops of dancing girls—without which Hindu greatness would be incomplete—serve to maintain the rustic splendour